

2017 -- H 6121

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LC002498
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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2017

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A N A C T

RELATING TO STATE AFFAIRS AND GOVERNMENT -- OPEN MEETINGS

Introduced By: Representatives Serpa, and Fellela

Date Introduced: April 14, 2017

Referred To: House Judiciary

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Section 42-46-6 of the General Laws in Chapter 42-46 entitled "Open
2 Meetings" is hereby amended to read as follows:

3 **42-46-6. Notice.**

4 (a) All public bodies shall give written notice of their regularly scheduled meetings at the
5 beginning of each calendar year. The notice shall include the dates, times, and places of the
6 meetings and shall be provided to members of the public upon request and to the secretary of
7 state at the beginning of each calendar year in accordance with subsection (f).

8 (b) Public bodies shall give supplemental written public notice of any meeting within a
9 minimum of forty-eight (48) hours before the date. This notice shall include the date the notice
10 was posted, the date, time and place of the meeting, and a statement specifying the nature of the
11 business to be discussed. Copies of the notice shall be maintained by the public body for a
12 minimum of one year. Nothing contained herein shall prevent a public body, other than a school
13 committee, from adding additional items to the agenda by majority vote of the members. School
14 committees may, however, add items for informational purposes only, pursuant to a request,
15 submitted in writing, by a member of the public during the public comment session of the school
16 committee's meetings. Said informational items may not be voted upon unless they have been
17 posted in accordance with the provisions of this section. Such additional items shall be for
18 informational purposes only and may not be voted on except where necessary to address an
19 unexpected occurrence that requires immediate action to protect the public or to refer the matter

1 to an appropriate committee or to another body or official.

2 (c) Written public notice shall include, but need not be limited to, posting a copy of the
3 notice at the principal office of the public body holding the meeting, or if no principal office
4 exists, at the building in which the meeting is to be held, and in at least one other prominent place
5 within the governmental unit, and electronic filing of the notice with the secretary of state
6 pursuant to subsection (f); however, nothing contained herein shall prevent a public body from
7 holding an emergency meeting, upon an affirmative vote of the majority of the members of the
8 body when the meeting is deemed necessary to address an unexpected occurrence that requires
9 immediate action to protect the public. If an emergency meeting is called, a meeting notice and
10 agenda shall be posted as soon as practicable and shall be electronically filed with the secretary of
11 state pursuant to subsection (e) and, upon meeting, the public body shall state for the record and
12 minutes why the matter must be addressed in less than forty-eight (48) hours and only discuss the
13 issue or issues which created the need for an emergency meeting. Nothing contained herein shall
14 be used in the circumvention of the spirit and requirements of this chapter.

15 (d) All public bodies shall include as part of their agenda of their meeting an open forum
16 or public comment session wherein any citizen may speak on any topic, whether or not this topic
17 is on the agenda, for not more than five (5) minutes per speaker. Nothing within this chapter shall
18 prohibit any public body, or the members thereof, from responding to comments initiated by a
19 member of the public during a properly noticed open forum even if the subject matter of a
20 citizen's comments or discussions were not previously posted, provided such matters shall be for
21 informational purposes only and may not be voted on except where necessary to address an
22 unexpected occurrence that requires immediate action to protect the public or to refer the matter
23 to an appropriate committee or to another body or official. ~~Nothing contained in this chapter~~
24 ~~requires any public body to hold an open forum session, to entertain or respond to any topic nor~~
25 ~~does it prohibit any public body from limiting comment on any topic at such an open forum~~
26 ~~session. No public body, or the members thereof, may use this section to circumvent the spirit or~~
27 ~~requirements of this chapter.~~

28 (e) A school committee may add agenda items not appearing in the published notice
29 required by this section under the following conditions:

30 (1) The revised agenda is electronically filed with the secretary of state pursuant to
31 subsection (f), and is posted on the school district's website and the two (2) public locations
32 required by this section at least forty-eight (48) hours in advance of the meeting;

33 (2) The new agenda items were unexpected and could not have been added in time for
34 newspaper publication;

1 (3) Upon meeting, the public body states for the record and minutes why the agenda
2 items could not have been added in time for newspaper publication and need to be addressed at
3 the meeting;

4 (4) A formal process is available to provide timely notice of the revised agenda to any
5 person who has requested that notice, and the school district has taken reasonable steps to make
6 the public aware of this process; and

7 (5) The published notice shall include a statement that any changes in the agenda will be
8 posted on the school district's web site and the two (2) public locations required by this section
9 and will be electronically filed with the secretary of state at least forty-eight (48) hours in advance
10 of the meeting.

11 (f) All notices required by this section to be filed with the secretary of state shall be
12 electronically transmitted to the secretary of state in accordance with rules and regulations which
13 shall be promulgated by the secretary of state. This requirement of the electronic transmission and
14 filing of notices with the secretary of state shall take effect one year after this subsection takes
15 effect.

16 (g) If a public body fails to transmit notices in accordance with this section, then any
17 aggrieved person may file a complaint with the attorney general in accordance with § 42-46-8.

18 SECTION 2. This act shall take effect upon passage.

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EXPLANATION
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
OF

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RELATING TO STATE AFFAIRS AND GOVERNMENT -- OPEN MEETINGS

1 This act would require that all public bodies include as part of their agenda an open
2 forum or public comment session wherein any citizen may speak on any topic whether or not on
3 the agenda, for no more than five (5) minutes per speaker.

4 This act would take effect upon passage.

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